



**RECOMMENDATIONS ON
MMSD BLACK
EXCELLENCE
JUNE 24, 2019**

Black Excellence Coalition and Think Tank

Madison, WI

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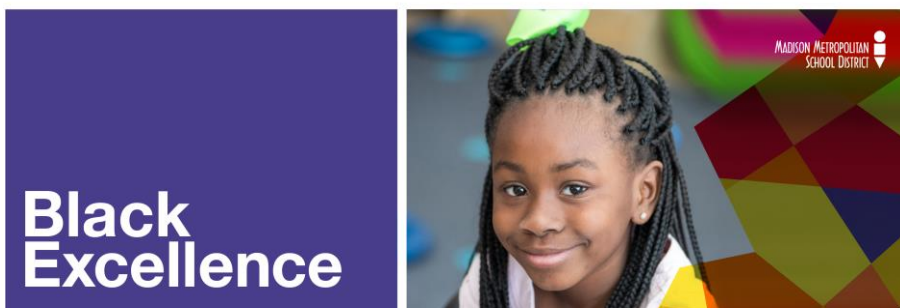
INTRODUCTION & OPENING STATEMENT

This document and set of recommendations is compiled from the rich array of perspectives from the Black Excellence Coalition, Think Tank and community allies. The expectations, ideas and recommendations represented in this document reflect the voices of Black graduates of the Madison School District, Black educators and administrators in the Madison School District, parents and grandparents of currently enrolled Black and multi-racial students, students, community partners, scholars, higher education faculty, community professionals, activists and concerned citizens. During the process of bringing people together we heard a mix of concerns and unwavering support for the Madison School District to “make things right” for Black students and their families.

As one of the Black Excellence Think Tank members stated, “If the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) is serious about achieving and promoting Black Excellence, it must admit there is an obstructive culture that is a barrier to realizing its stated goal.” There is an appreciation for the stated goal and aspirational claim for Black Excellence in MMSD. Yet, given MMSD’s long history of failing to make space for and to nurture the excellence of Black children and their families, there is an assertion that MMSD must undergo fundamental changes in its organizational culture and practices. Historical and current issues with Black students and families in MMSD have persisted and unfortunately have been highlighted in far too many media outlets and reports to list.

Our recommendations aim to **identify and change the conditions** that have and continue to impede the expression and nurturance of Black Excellence in the district. Given the complex and dynamic nature of the issues that affect the lives of Black children and their families in Madison, this requires constant vigilance, assessment, and analysis of district efforts **by and with Black people** so that we can make informed, adaptive changes as necessary in service to the fulfillment of Black Excellence.

We want to see: - Shift in the sense of belonging for Black children and youth - A multi-generational approach to the work - The centering of youth voices - An expansion of resources and access to opportunities – More community participation and sustained engagement – Budget and policy analysis – Sharing of power with those impacted – Support for Black families and staff – Gender justice – Our Black children protected and believed.



BLACK EXCELLENCE COALITION

Why a Coalition?

The Madison School District knows that it cannot create solutions for Black students in isolation. The District recognizes that it must include and honor those who hold expertise and lived experiences to share our success and address persistent issues that hinder our commitment to Black Excellence. The forming of a Black Excellence Coalition has been an inclusive and intentional approach on the District's part to partner and share power with those who are impacted across and within the school system. Several groups of individuals have been engaged around a common goal: To ensure that Black students, their families, and staff working inside the system receive the support they need to thrive. These individuals have been instrumental in forming the recommendations and will be critical to the success of future strategies that will positively impact Black students, families and staff. The Madison Metro School District knows that coalition building takes time and sustained effort and we commit our energy and resources to build, grown and sustain this Coalition.

Purpose of the Coalition

The Black Excellence Coalition is charged with the task of applying analysis, developing recommendations and challenging the District to actualize on its stated goal for Black Excellence.

Guiding Principles of the Coalition

- We will **center the voices of our Black students** and generate ideas and examples that will provide Black students with liberating experiences that value and affirm their strengths and gifts instead of focusing on deficits.
- We want MMSD to **pay attention to what Black families and staff are sharing** about their experiences with the District and we hold an expectation that these issues will be acted upon with urgency.
- We want to help identify a **new set of metrics** that will help the District measure the **wellbeing** of Black students.

2018-19

The District's Family, Youth & Community Engagement Department began holding meetings on February 26, 2019 for parents of Black children. It should be noted that White parents of bi-racial and adopted Black students have been included. The group developed conversation agreements for the meetings, listened and supported each other and engaged in a variety of topics to help inform the recommendations. The coalition has provided a space for parents (and staff) to talk about their experiences and to also learn what the District is doing in some key areas that were of most interest to Black Excellence. Approximately 75 people attended eight (8) meetings between February – June, 2019. See appendix for meeting notes.

“It’s about accountability. How is the District going to deliver?” – Parent

Black Excellence Think Tank

The Black Excellence Think Tank is an invited group of brilliant thinkers and GET-IT-DONE Black folx dedicated to Black people in the greater Madison area. This group was formed to help accelerate the thinking on what it will take to achieve Black Excellence in MMSD.

Members of the Black Excellence Think Tank

- Astra Iheukumere, Director of Strategic Partnerships, MMSD and graduate of MMSD
- Brandi Grayson, Parent, Activist, Founder of Urban Triage, LLC
- Camara Stovall, Parent, Teacher, Charles Hamilton Houston Institute
- Christin Calloway, Race to Equity Policy Associate, KidsForward
- Dr. Gloria Ladson, Professor Emeritus, UW-Madison, School of Education
- Dr. Jeffrey Lewis, Founder, Natural Circles of Support
- Jasmia Hamilton, Parent, Race & Gender Equity Coordinator, YWCA
- Mahnker Dahnweih - Community Power Building Coordinator, Freedom Inc.
- Marian Slaughter, Facilitator, Natural Circles of Support
- Matt Braunginn, Senior Associate with the Mayors Innovation Project, Center on Wisconsin Strategy
- Prenicia Clifton, Precollege Director, UW-Madison
- Qiana Holmes-Abanukam, Parent, Education Specialist, Road Home
- Roderick “Rudy” Bankston, Restorative Justice Coach, MMSD
- Vanessa McDowell, CEO, YWCA of Madison

What does Black Excellence mean to you? “A black person being the best person they can be. Not succeeding by everyone else's standards, but by succeeding by the standards we set ourselves.” -

12th Grade, West High

Expectations of the Black Excellence Coalition and Think Tank

Those who have participated have given their time and talent freely to identify the major areas of concerns and areas of opportunity regarding Black Excellence. It was important to those involved to know that their dedication and expertise are valued by the District. Thus, the following expectations:

1. We expect to **influence and/or review policy** around systemic Black Excellence within MMSD. We would like to be part of a policy group that assists with policy review focused on the impact on Black students. We know we add value to identifying systemic issues and barriers that prevent Black excellence from being achieved.
2. We expect that members of this group are part of a **regular agenda** with Administrators and Board of Education members, depending on our requested needs.
3. We expect to **evaluate and improve upon these recommendations** along the way. We offer these initial recommendations in June, 2019 and will continue to refine and evaluate them as the work and investments continue over several years. We will monitor how the recommendations are implemented.
4. We expect that Black Excellence will be a **budget priority** in the next fiscal budget (2019-2020). We see the proposed \$350,000 as an initial investment. We expect to see a permanent line item with room to grow dedicated to Black Excellence infrastructure and initiatives in the future.
5. We expect to be in partnership with MMSD on **developing the proposals and ideas** of how dedicated funds are spent and guided by our recommendations.
6. We expect to be able to hold the District **accountable for the Black youth experience** in MMSD. Specifically, we expect that the District and schools create a culture of high expectations and academic success for Black students and their families. We want to ensure that the social and emotional needs of Black students are being met, with a specific effort to use culturally responsive, restorative and trauma-informed practices in schools and community. We expect to help determine and the academic supports needed that will help Black students thrive and excel.

CENTERING BLACK STUDENT VOICES

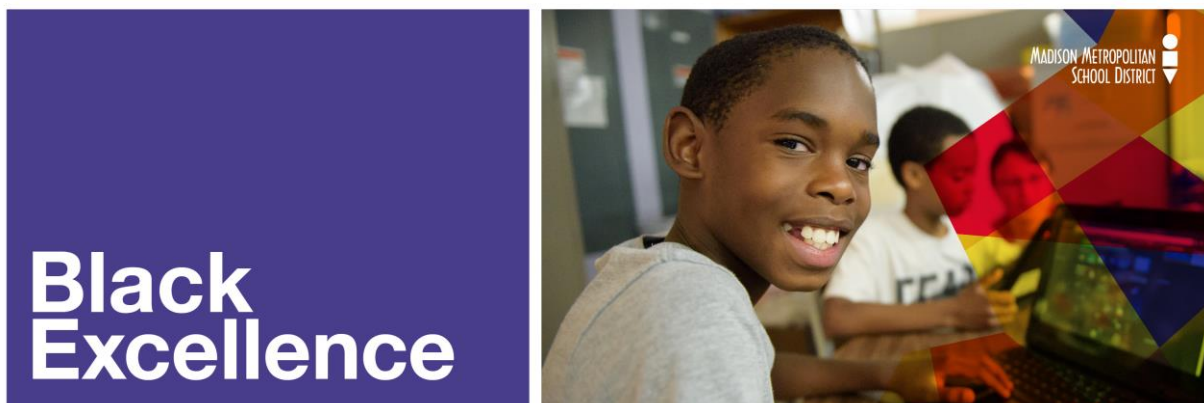
We want to **center the voices, ideas and experiences of Black youth** first and foremost. We believe our recommendations address the systemic issues that we know must be addressed in order for MMSD to achieve its goal. We are not starting with traditional academic data. Instead, we focus on the voices of our youth. The following pages (7-12) highlight what they say about Black Excellence.

In June 2019 the Madison Metro School District administered a Black Excellence survey to students who are identified as African American and Multiracial students with Black/African ancestry in grades 6 through 12. The results are as below and indicate what youth say they need. (As of June 11, 2019, n= 608 respondents). Open-ended responses from students were coded into themes by MMSD Data & Survey Analyst. We have also included some examples of direct quotes from students in response to questions.

“Black Excellence is not just something that should be talked about, but should be represented. Make students comfortable in class, reach out for student voice, and share cultures. It's not even just about education, it's who we are individuals and what we've accomplished in our past, present, and what we will accomplish in our future. So, Black Excellence can mean 1,000 things, but it's how we live through it and cherish it as much as we can.” – 8th grade, Sennett Middle School

In your school, have you heard teachers, staff or your peers talk about Black Excellence?

Yes	35%	211
Maybe	24%	145
No	41%	252
Total		608



What does Black Excellence mean to you? Choose all that apply.

Black people come from excellence - our history includes amazing people	21%	266
Black people do great things - we are excellent in many things that we do	21%	272
Black students can accomplish excellence in school, college and careers	23%	289
Black students with really good grades and test scores are excellent	10%	125
I have pride in being Black and celebrate my people, my culture	21%	267
Other ideas, please tell us what they are:	4%	57

Other ideas (coded by theme): Celebrating Perseverance (31% / 15 responses);

Excellence applies to all (18% / 9 responses); Setting High Standards for Oneself (8% / 4 responses)

- *"Black Excellence is black people coming together, uplifting one another and accepting who we are by loving ourselves and our history even though it holds a lot of pain" - 10th Grade, Shabazz High*
- *"Black Excellence is more than just resilience, strength, courage, patience, etc. My people have been taken advantage of, beaten, lynched, accused, bruised and yet we still get back up and try again. We continue to prove those who doubt us wrong and then the same breath pray for their lives to be filled with joy. I could have easily said that I have great pride in my culture and my people, however I just wanted you to get a little feel of just how important it is to me." - 12th Grade, West High*
- *"Black excellence is lifting our brothers and sisters up with no judgment or corruption. Regaining our true history and loving our true selves despite the circumstances placed upon melaninated humans" – 8th Grade, Hamilton*
- *"Taking our color, the current oppressions and our history and using it as motivation to achieving great things." – 9th Grade, Memorial High School*
- *"Thriving in a school environment that's not necessarily pro black" – 10th Grade, West High School*
- *"Black excellence is all black people. It's the way we talk the way we walk and the way we carry ourselves in a nation that has no respect for our people" – 11th Grade, Capital High*
- *"Black excellence is every African- American person, it is not described by what they do but what they strive for and believe. (Black excellence is just being yourself)" – 6th Grade, Cherokee*
- *"Multiracial equality" – 7th Grade, Badger Rock*
- *"We also can do bad things but that does not mean we are bad people, or violent" – 6th Grade, Cherokee*
- *"Black excellence to me is a black person who finds something they're good at and pushes that ability to become the best. Whether it is speaking, writing, drawing, playing an instrument, or anything. If they realize their potential ability and use it to push themselves or speak out to others in any way possible, that would be a black person, showing and supporting black excellence." - 8th Grade, Jefferson*

What makes you feel valued as a Black youth?

Celebrating Black History & Culture	18%	48
Being Recognized & Heard	11%	29
Excelling Academically or Personally	9%	25
Participating in Black Student Groups	9%	25
Having Peer & Adult Support	8%	23
Being Around Family	8%	22
My Hair or My Skin Color	5%	14
Being Treated Equally	4%	11
Nothing	3%	9
Being a Role Model or Leader	2%	6
Total		272

- *"I feel valued when there are teachers that look like me" - 8th Grade, Black Hawk Middle School*
- *"What makes me feel valued is being believed in and being pushed to newer limits. The bar right now is too low for Black students, and I appreciate being held to higher standards." -8th Grade, O'Keeffe*
- *"Knowing that I'm making a change for those who were unable to." -12th Grade, La Follette*
- *"I feel valued as a black youth when my history is embraced in a positive light other than my ancestors just being slaves. Also, when people take the time to realize how much black culture has influenced today's society." -Grade 8, Sennett*
- *"That I can share my experience of being an African American with other African Americans." – 7th grade, Spring Harbor*
- *"I feel valued when I'm in black clubs like sisterhood and BSU" – 9th grade, East*

Does your school offer groups that meet the needs of Black youth?

Definitely yes	29%	120
Probably yes	32%	134
Might or might not	22%	91
Probably not	9%	36
Definitely not	8%	34
Total		415

What could the school change to help students feel better about being in the school?

Update Curriculum/Classes	22%	54
Develop Support Systems	16%	38
Hire Black Teachers	10%	23
Address Racism	8%	19
Create Groups for Black Youth	7%	16
Treat Students Equally	5%	13
Improve Black History Month	3%	8
Change Staff Behavior	2%	6
Total		241

- *“When teaching lessons in classes like social studies; not only focus on what happened in white history because that’s what they focus on the most (white history) and the only black history they talk about is slavery when there is so much more than that! They are teaching us that since in the past that black ppl were slaves, that they are basically not strong and kind of less than everyone! and, the only time when everyone takes the time to learn about black people, in general, is in February.” – 7th Grade, O’Keeffe*
- *“Inform students on the importance of not saying racial slurs, Black Student Union, Maybe when talking about black history, talk about what happened with our history, history about our ancestors history letting students know that our history isn’t only slaves, MLK, and Harriet Tubman.” – 7th Grade, Spring Harbor*
- *“Have more groups for us.” – 8th Grade, Whitehorse*
- *“Have the Multiracial, Black, and just colored all around people talk in a group to each other about how they feel about their school.” – 7th grade, Black Hawk*
- *“Maybe doing like how they do in college having a room dedicated to black kids to walk in hang out, study, talk, get extra help. Also, having a multicultural office for colored kids period instead of just having a student services.” – 11th Grade, Memorial*
- *“A more culturally accepting place where students can depend on each other and on staff members to get help. But most importantly, MORE BLACK TEACHERS. Not support staff, not special ed teachers (though we could always use more of them), but Black classroom teachers that can be there to support students all day.” – 8th Grade, O’Keeffe*
- *“Change the book in history class. Fix the gap that forms between minority and white students. Have support systems in place that are made up of mainly black staff so that they’re on the same wavelength as the students they’re talking to. Encourage the sharing of African culture and knowledge in the classroom” – 11th Grade, East*
- *“Help the people who really need the help, even though some may not want it. Or have BLACK teacher teach them so they feel more comfortable.” – 8th Grade, Sherman*

What are your ideas for making Black Excellence a reality?

Create Clubs/Activities for Black Students	15%	32
Broaden the Curriculum	12%	26
Raise Expectations for Black Students	11%	24
Support Black Students	10%	22
Recognize Student Achievement	9%	19
Hire Black Teachers	3%	7
Connect with Successful Black Adults	2%	4
Total		220

- *"1. Create clubs and events, and even activities to help Black, Multiracial, etc. students feel like they belong and that they don't have to be shy to speak on what they believe; 2. Have meetings with students on how they are doing, how's their day going, and just to check in on their daily life; 3. make sure all of the students feel welcome at La Follette"* – 9th Grade, La Follette
- *"Have groups at community centers and having pot lucks and picnics that surround black excellence"* – 8th Grade, Black Hawk
- *"Have more black groups BSU, etc. Celebrations, show off black students"* – 9th Grade, East
- *"Having black excellence campaigns and afterschool actives involving black excellence"* – 6th Grade, Cherokee
- *"Having more groups and events to support black youth and just schools showing kids that they can exceed in so much more then what they might see in movies or everyday life"* – 7th Grade, Spring Harbor
- *"I've been thinking about a project that I call W.E.B.S. Which stands for Woke Educated Black Students. I want this project to help students (especially Seniors in Highschool and College) find where they're going next in their lives. Help them through hardships and help them achieve their dreams and goals. I'm still planning project W.E.B.S but I think it will be a phenomenal change to our educational system. Helping students of ANY age make it big in their lives. I hope you consider this plan."* – 8th Grade, Sennett
- *"More black clubs and groups"* – 11th Grade, East
- *"I feel like it's about showing our skills and what we have learned and how we have improved over time."* - 8th Grade, Sherman
- *"Black Excellence is already a reality, it's just a matter of encouraging other students to believe that it is within them. Let them find the subjects and the places where their black excellence can shine. For a lot of black students, they are simply not given the opportunity to reach out or improve. Allow them to do more."* – 11th Grade, West
- *"We need to readjust something's about our curriculum. We need to make what we learn about more culturally diverse. I'm tired of hearing about slavery, I'm tired of hearing about how black people couldn't fight wars with white people until the Tuskegee airmen, I'm tired of hearing about Martin Luther king for two days and then totally dismissing his power. Let's learn about successful black people that aren't athletes or rappers, and implement that into what we are told to learn by the district."* – 9th Grade, La Follette

Rank suggestions about Black Excellence, with 1 being most important and 5 being the least important idea.

Change the books we read, teach us about our history

1	2	3	4	5	Total
31%	14%	12%	21%	22%	284

Create social or interest groups focused on the needs of Black youth

1	2	3	4	5	Total
20%	23%	23%	21%	14%	284

Have a dedicated space for the Black student union or a culture center

1	2	3	4	5	Total
18%	28%	23%	18%	13%	284

Display artwork that reflects Black culture

1	2	3	4	5	Total
15%	14%	11%	21%	38%	284

Hold special events like assemblies, celebrations for Black youth

1	2	3	4	5	Total
15%	21%	32%	19%	12%	284

STUDENT IDEAS – FROM BLACK STUDENT UNIONS

The Executive Director of Family, Youth & Community Engagement visited each Black Student Union to ask them their thoughts about Black Excellence during 2018-19. Students shared these comments about Black Excellence:

- “We need more celebrations – like a mini Essence Fest (music, artists)”
- “There could be a city-wide or school level showcase of arts & athletics”
- “We need more teachers of Color”
- “Draw upon African heritage, celebrate African culture, AFRO beats!”
- “Collaborate with other clubs – let’s show Unity with other students who feel marginalized”
- “BSU is the one place where I feel affirmed!”
- “We need more role models, especially Black female role models at our schools.”
- “We want more opportunities to do community service out in the community.”
- “We want to run our own events (that generate income for us)”
- “We want our own space (they have a designated room, but sometimes are kicked out of the space).”
- “Hold an assembly for the Black students. We could have a panel of speakers and just an opportunity to talk about stuff.”
- “Encourage more community members to get involved”
- “Share Black history facts on the monitors in the school, year round, not just during Black History month.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on lived experiences, recent community responses to racialized events in MMSD and information presented by District staff at Black Excellence Coalition meetings. These recommendations are not exhaustive, but are aimed to **change the conditions that have and continue to impede the expression and nurturance of Black Excellence in the district.**

Category	Recommendation	Timeline
Invest in Our Black Students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a report that uses qualitative and quantitative data that establishes a baseline of experiences that Black students are having in schools. We want to know about experiences of culture, climate, acts of racism and how students experience adult responses to behavior. We strongly recommend that some of the funding for Black Excellence be used to contract with an external organization to capture authentic Black student experiences. 2. Invest resources to empower children and youth with tools on how to self-advocate and report on racist incidents and other acts of discrimination. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2019-2020 (year 1) 2. 2019-2020 (year 1)
Address Discipline Disproportionality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We want the implementation of the Behavior Education Plan to address racialized outcomes for Black students that are indicators the school-to-prison pipeline. We expect to see increased investment in restorative justice and other support services to students. 2. If any school decides to pilot the removal of a School Resource Office there should be a comprehensive evaluation plan so there is accuracy and transparency about the effects on students and staff. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2019-2020 (year 1) 2. TBD

Category	Recommendation	Timeline
Budget Investments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dedicate an investment in Black Excellence beginning in 2019-2020. We support the proposed \$250,000 from Fund 80 and the \$100,000 from Local (Fund 10). This investment is a starting point; we do not believe it will be enough to have significant impact over time. 2. Use Black youth in the process to help determine programming and supports they say they want and need. We want them to feel the impact. Funding process and spending plan should be guided and aligned by results of the Black Excellence survey and directly by youth participation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2019-2020 and subsequent years.
Change Curriculum and Enhance Community Role in Black History	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We propose that Black community members and partners can play a critical role in enhancing efforts on teaching Black history and racial socialization for students. MMSD needs to include Black people in the design to teach Black history. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2019-2020 (year 1; meet with Social Studies to scope out work)
Human Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Performance management of teachers: Consider using a quality assessment checklist for teachers to use in the classroom to increase feelings of belonging and respect (such as Youth Program Quality Assessment) 2. Benchmark against other Districts that are using Human Resource processes and trainings to prevent and disrupt racism and discrimination in the classroom (similar in the way that 	

Category	Recommendation	Timeline
	organizations do with sexual harassment)	
Professional Development of staff – racial equity / cultural competence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Professional learning of teachers on issues of race, culture and equity should be measured through student surveys / focus groups at least quarterly. We want to know how learning by teachers results in relationships with students. 2. Set an expectation that all staff have to be culturally competent and emphasize they have to do the work (it is not the job of People of Color). Train staff on how to have uncomfortable conversations and (2a). Create support systems for teachers to process. MMSD must create the spaces for teachers to do this reflective work. 3. Invest in professional learning to help teachers learn how to differentiate their instruction and develop lesson plans to engage students. Too many students say they are not engaged. We need Black Excellence inside classrooms. 4. Invest in all staff (not just behavior responders) having trauma informed care training using techniques that are culturally relevant. 5. Engage youth in identifying teachers and staff who are excellent in equity and feature them. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2019-2020 Report out Spring 2020 2. Begin 2019-2020; multi-year 3. 2019-2020 (meet with Professional Learning Department to scope out)
Support Families	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Due to the economic conditions that many Black families endure in this community, we want to see Black parents who can serve as liaisons or 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2019-2020 (year 1 – explore options) 2. 2019-2020 (year 1- explore options)

Category	Recommendation	Timeline
	<p>advocates get paid (perhaps as Peer-to-Peer advocates). Invest in training parents.</p> <p>2. Create an independent Ombudsman office so that families have ability to share concerns and incidents with “neutral” office.</p>	
Engage community partners in impactful ways	<p>1. Create a list of all community partners who currently work with District and set a goal that if community partners receive any District funds they must demonstrate which students they serve. Set a priority for those who serve majority Black students.</p> <p>2. Use community partners in new and innovative ways to provide solutions for Black students and families. Convene community partners to generate ideas that can be implemented; partner with the City of Madison too.</p>	1. & 2. (2019-2020)
District Level Accountability	<p>1. Include Black parent and student input on the hiring of the next Superintendent – we want influence and power. We also want to have ongoing interactions with leadership as we need.</p> <p>2. Ensure that bargaining teams with MTI reflect the % of Black student body</p> <p>3. Work with the Black Excellence Coalition / Think Tank to develop a multi-year plan. We want to see more evidence that there is a long term plan that will survive through any leadership changes at MMSD.</p> <p>4. Add staff capacity to the Family, Youth & Community Engagement Department so that Black Excellence work can</p>	District level can start in 2019-2020

Category	Recommendation	Timeline
	<p>continue. There needs to be adequate staffing for Black Excellence.</p> <p>5. Ensure that all major plans across the District that impact students, teaching and learning have a real commitment to Black Excellence.</p>	

Data Requests and Future Reports

We know that data is important, however you will notice we did not lead our recommendations with a reference to traditional academic data. We want to expand our thinking beyond the ways that Black children and youth are defined. We will hold the District accountable for educating Black children and youth and will keep our eyes on the data, but we want to capture other data points.

- We expect there will be an annual report on the metrics connected to Goal 3 and what key actions the District is taking to impact the metrics.
- We want students and their families to know there is accountability for the emotional trauma of discipline and other racist acts. We want regular reporting on how these issues have been handled.
- We want to see the budget analyzed to show total investments across District in Black children (not just children of Color).
- The topic of curriculum and teaching our Black students about the history of the Diaspora continues to surface. We want a report on what efforts are being made to diversify the books and curriculum being used in schools per grade level and the process for selection.
- MMSD has recently hired a recruiter. We want a bi-annual report on the recruitment strategies that will bring in more Black educators; a report on the retention rates for Teachers of Color and specifically Black teachers and staff. We want this separated from teachers and staff of Color and support staff. Include efforts made to retain the Black teachers you have.
- Report out on what professional learning is happening specifically on race & equity (content and frequency).
- We request that the District be transparent about how it is using data. The District should articulate which students are defined as Black in data sets and reports.

Next Steps

These recommendations signify the completion of one benchmark and the beginning of the next phase of work.

Below is a general outline of the next phase of work for 2019-2020:

Develop funding process for Black Excellence investments	July – August 30, 2019
Announce Funding Process and selection cycle for Black Excellence investments	September 1 – October 15, 2019
Write a multi-year plan to incorporate these recommendations and prioritize which will directly impact youth in 2019-2020 (along with budget).	August – October 30, 2019
Hold meetings, gather data and determine timeline for requested reports and evaluation	July – December, 2019
Hold meetings, monitor implementation of recommendations and assess impact of funding process	January – April, 2020
Refine recommendations for 2020-2021 Budget requests for 2020-2021	April – May 2020

Appendix
Coalition Meeting Notes
Previous Feedback from EQTbyDesign, LLC

Black Excellence
Meeting Notes on 2/26/19
Meeting #1
JC Wright Middle School (LMC)

We had 16 parents attend the meeting.

Racial representation of families *appeared* to be: 10 Black, 5 White, 1 Multi-racial

Parents represented Leopold, Franklin, Chavez, Shorewood, Crestwood, Randall, Glen Stephens, Lindbergh, Hamilton, JC Wright, West, Jefferson, East, West and La Follette

Purpose of the meeting:

- Learn more about MMSD means by Black Excellence and the goal on African American students

- Share feedback and reactions

- Discuss racial composition of Black Excellence Coalition members

- Identify next steps that can be taken to keep the momentum going

Initial reactions/ comments to the presentation (verbal sharing in the group)

- It's about accountability. How is the District going to deliver?
- Who is teaching the PD?
- Kids don't learn from people they don't like. Why do you keep staff who aren't on board?
- Do teachers have a safe space to voice their biases? You have to know what they are really thinking and feeling.
- Why can't we bring amazing Black folks from the community into the PD? That's where the Coalition and the PD/ Learning should come together. Representation in the PD matters. Experience of what happens also matters. Let us be in the role plays.
- What are the resources for Black Excellence?
- What is being done to change the curriculum?

What are your initial reactions to Black Excellence? (Written responses)

- Needed! Huge task on several fronts
- Love it!!! Great start. Need more resources
- I think it's a huge hill to climb but necessary to do
- Much needed. Long overdue discussion.
- Not a product, but a process. Collaboration is essential.
- Not about perfection, but progress.
- It's great and we have a great need and plenty of work to do.
- Black Excellence is a mindset that does not have a one size fits all definition, but needs to be felt, heard and experienced at every school.
- Accountability for racist teachers.
- Set measureable goals/minimum for engagement.
- What is on the ground?

- Culturally relevant materials are needed.
- Black Excellence doesn't have one single definition.
- Budget shift from ERO to resources
- About time!

What role do you think you can play? (Written responses)

- Participate on committee meetings (evenings are better).
- Lead on an educator's perspective (White educator)
- School ambassador. Each schools should have some parents designated as Black Excellence ambassadors.
- Educate myself so I can speak to it and be part of the solution instead of the problem.
- I can be an ambassador when the money is here.
- As a white parent I want to hear, listen, learn and become an intentional ally.
- Will be willing to align my business with the goals.
- Not focusing on racism but helping to create/educate/awareness of equity.
- Setting action items.
- Combine community coalition with anti-racist education and professional development team.
- Whatever role is needed.

Other thoughts (written responses)

- Hiring of Black staff. I'd love to figure that out.
- Happy to participate. Happy to sit out if that helps too
- Being part of the discussion of how the road will look to get there.
- Not complaining about problems, but develop solutions. Focus on the positive.
- Let's get started and start with the children and families.
- Thank you for getting this to the forefront of the framework.
- How does DLI play into Black Excellence?
- What about IEPs and 504 Plans?
- How can we strive for Black Excellence when there's a dis-connect with MMSD & families?
- What about quality early education?
- Can funding be shifted from EROs to Black Excellence?
- Start with who you have – this should be a movement focused on everyone who strives for Black Excellence.

Suggested Next Steps

- Have another meeting in March. Use email and FB to communicate. Let's keep it going! (Nichelle needs to find a date in March before Spring Break)
- You need to tell us what we can do! (Let's turn this into action)
- Next meeting – we want to focus more on the Coalition description, make edits, and get clear about how to turn this into real work.

- We also need to build relationships with one another, get to know each other (we need to establish ground rules for how we want to engage with each other and determine how white parents of Black children will play a role in the Coalition). Someone suggested the guidelines from the Color Brave Space.
-

Black Excellence
Meeting Notes on 3/19/19
Meeting #2
JC Wright Middle School (LMC)

We had 17 parents and staff attend the meeting.

Racial representation of attendees *appeared* to be: 11 Black, 5 White, 1 Multi-racial. Two parents were present from the first meeting on 2/26/19.

Parents represented Midvale/Lincoln, Leopold, Franklin, Chavez, Shorewood, Crestwood, Randall, Marquette, Van Hise, Hamilton, JC Wright, West, Jefferson, Sennett, East, West and La Follette

Purpose of the meeting:

- Determine our group values and agreements
- Build community with one another
- Review purpose of the Coalition and make suggested edits
- Identify topics for future meetings in April

The group was provided with a self-reflection worksheet from “Being Color Brave” as a way to share and meet with others in the group. Attendees enjoyed getting to meet people, but it was noted that the worksheet was centered in whiteness and should not be used at a Coalition on Black Excellence.

The group developed the following **Group Values & Agreements:**

- Confidentiality – take what you learn and protect the personal information
- Be solution focused
- Assume positive intentions with people
- Speak your truth without apology
- Keep Black students at the center
- Share air time
- Center Black voices
- White fragility will not derail the conversation

Small groups worked on the purpose of the Coalition and provided edits. ***Changes are bolded and italicized.***

Purpose of the Coalition

The Black Excellence Coalition is charged with the task of ***making demands and recommendations*** developing key recommendations and actions that will have the following impacts for Black students, ***families and staff*** in MMSD.

- ~~Affirm excellence~~
- ~~Create conditions to shape and transform mindsets of educators~~
- Provide liberating experiences for our students to learn and affirm the richness of African and African American people and the way that racial inequities occur in educational systems
- ~~Promote and nurture social emotional learning in our Black students~~ ***Provide support groups (social – emotional, trauma) and meeting space/circles for mentoring/tutoring that is supported by parents***
- Create a culture for success for students and their families
- Determine how we can create more safe spaces for honest, healing and growth for our Black students ***Create space for restorative justice***
- Address academic supports and any other supports needed from the perspective of our Black students and families
- ***Black parent advocacy***
- ***Reducing policing in schools (with accountability)***
- ***All staff (including Black staff) maintain high standards for Black students***
- ***Give parents tools to support students and be more present in the schools***
- ***Engage and pay parents to influence / support students***
- ***Engage staff in cultural competence and emphasize they have to do the work (it is not the job of People of Color). Train staff on how to have uncomfortable conversations.***
- ***Hold administration and staff accountable***
- ***Build relationships and trust with staff and administration***
- ***Protect our children with excellence***
- ***Identify and remove barriers to address inequities***

Future topics in April

- Review data (where are we drawing it from?)
 - Need to know more about hiring practices
 - Want to know more about professional learning (who and what)
 - We have to have youth voice centered in these recommendations
-

Black Excellence
Meeting Notes on 4/10/19
Meeting #3
JC Wright Middle School (LMC)

We had 8 parents and staff attend the meeting.

Racial representation of attendees *appeared* to be: 5 Black, 3 White, 7 of 8 attendees have attended before.

Parents represented Chavez, Crestwood, JC Wright, West, Jefferson, Sennett, East, West and La Follette

Purpose of the meeting:

- Build community with one another
- Review recommendations on ways to engage more families and community members from EQT by Design report and strategize on ways to get more people involved
- Review purpose of the Coalition and tease out more recommendations

The group follows these **Group Values & Agreements:**

- Confidentiality – take what you learn and protect the personal information
- Be solution focused
- Assume positive intentions with people
- Speak your truth without apology
- Keep Black students at the center
- Share air time
- Center Black voices
- White fragility will not derail the conversation

The group used the EQT by Design: MMSD Report on Neighborhood-Centered Engagement Sessions recommendations from April 6, 2018 to determine next steps to broaden our reach and engagement as the Black Excellence Coalition.

It was noted:

- We need to continue to have consistent spaces like we have been having to bring interested community members / families and staff together. It's important for people to have a voice and a place to share their truth.
- We need to “amp” up the commitment from those who have been attending. For instance, if you are part of the Coalition, make the commitment for a specific amount of time in order to get more traction. Nichelle said she needs to make this clearer.
- We need to customize how we're notifying people to come – use a variety of platforms to do so.
- We should be leveraging parent liaisons and Principals and letting people know this group exists. Why are we asking schools to have a representative at these meetings?
- We need to do more to build awareness. Do more informal networking using the Black Educators Network. Put an ad in Umojaa, Cap City Hues and work with Madison365.org Use word of mouth from this group. We need more people to know this is happening.
- We need to build more trust in this process. People need to know that this is a safe space and we have a voice.
- Change meeting locations. Get out to churches, community centers.
- MMSD needs to show up differently.

We reviewed the revised purpose of the Black Excellence Coalition from the March meeting. It was noted that some of the edits actually incorporated specific recommendations and should be pulled out as recommendations. Nichelle Nichols said she would do that and bring back to the group.

Purpose of the Coalition (updated April 2019)

The Black Excellence Coalition is charged with the task of **making demands and recommendations** that will have the following **impacts** for Black students, families and staff in MMSD.

Students

- Provide liberating experiences for our students to learn about the richness of African and African American people and the way that racial inequities occur in educational systems
- Provide support groups to address social – emotional, trauma)
- Create space for restorative justice
- Reducing policing in schools (with accountability)
- Create a culture for success for students and their families
- Address academic supports and any other supports needed from the perspective of our Black students and families (mentoring / tutoring) and can be supported by parents

Families

- Give parents tools to support students and be more present in the schools
- Engage and pay parents to influence / support students
- *Black parent advocacy*

Staff

- All staff (including Black staff) maintain high standards for Black students
 - Engage staff in cultural competence and emphasize they have to do the work (it is not the job of People of Color).
 - Train staff on how to have uncomfortable conversations
 - Build relationships and trust with staff and administration
 - Hold administration and staff accountable
 - Protect our children with excellence
 - Identify and remove barriers to address inequities
-

Black Excellence
Meeting Notes on 4/23/19
Meeting #4
JC Wright Middle School (LMC)

We had 17 parents and staff attend the meeting.

Racial representation of attendees *appeared* to be: 13 Black, 1 Multiracial, and 3 White.

5 of 17 attendees have attended before.

Parents represented Chavez, Crestwood, Mendota, JC Wright, West, Jefferson, Sennett, East, West and La Follette, UW Madison, DVR

Purpose of the meeting:

- Build community with one another
- Hear and discuss the District's plan to have staff complete professional learning in racial equity in 2019-2020.
- Make emerging recommendations regarding professional learning

The group follows these **Group Values & Agreements:**

- Confidentiality – take what you learn and protect the personal information
- Be solution focused
- Assume positive intentions with people
- Speak your truth without apology
- Keep Black students at the center
- Share air time
- Center Black voices
- White fragility will not derail the conversation

The District's Plan to advance racial equity through professional learning

The Executive Director of MMSD Professional Learning was present to discuss the drafted plan. A PowerPoint was used to illustrate the drafted core beliefs and guiding principles for the District's plan to implement a required 2.5-hours professional learning experience on issues related to race, racism and equity with all staff in 2019-2020. The PowerPoint also showed how the District embeds topics of racial equity in various professional learning

venues throughout the year. More detailed information was shared in a written plan that showed: induction of new principals, assistant principals and educators; quarterly institutes with school-based leadership teams; the plan for Welcome Back days in August at District and school level and the six (6) professional learning days scheduled into the school calendar.

The group was also told that MMSD is partnering with the YWCA to help us build internal capacity to facilitate the racial equity PD. In addition, some schools will go deeper and also complete the 16 hours of training in the YWCA curricula, led by trained facilitators.

Questions and Comments from the group

- “Those beliefs and the theory behind the professional learning is good, but will it happen?” [parent]
- “How are you selecting the facilitators?” [parent]
- “You say that a few schools will go deeper with the YWCA training – how will you select the schools?” [parent]
- “What exactly is the follow-up after induction of the new people?” [parent]
- “What about all the other people who aren’t new to the District?” [parent]
- “So all staff will have a 2.5-hours module and then what?” [parent]
- “We know there is White fragility with some of these teachers, there has to be something on this.” [parent]
- “There has to be choice in this required professional learning. There’s such a spectrum of what people understand about racism. I have gone out and done my own learning. Things get watered down by the time it get to the teacher level.” [staff person]
- “Will this change the curriculum? I want to know is it going to impact and translate in the classroom? What will be different?” [parent]
- “As teachers become more self-aware, it’s the beginning and it influences the way we teach and the curriculum we use” [staff person]

- “There’s so much stuff to deconstruct” [staff person]
- “What is the accountability for Principals? Because I hear something is happening at one school, but at my school it isn’t happening.” [parent and staff person]
- “Is this an on-going plan? Like, will this be the expectations for employees every year?” [staff person]
- “Why don’t you include an option where teachers volunteer 5-10 hours in the communities their students live in? Get out there and learn in a different way.” [staff person]
- “White people can’t teach something they haven’t lived.” [staff person and parents]
- “You need compassion in this type of learning.” [staff person and parents]
- “I still want to know what am I going to see that will be different. How are students being impacted and/or developed by the staff being developed?” [parent]

What will accountability look like for professional learning of staff in MMSSD?

- Everyone present felt that students and how they feel at school is one of the best ways to measure the effectiveness of the racial equity professional learning for all staff.
- A staff person who is a classroom teacher said the idea of “accountability” for professional learning was frightening, but recognized that it was needed. She wanted more tools afterwards to continue the learning on her own and with colleagues.

Suggestions to measure the impact of the professional learning included:

- Have a quarterly student survey asking them if they notice the curriculum changing and/or the interactions with teachers seem improved.
 - Ask students how they feel at school. Do it frequently to see if the professional learning has had an impact beyond the August Welcome Back days.
 - Share this professional learning with parents too. Build the community.
-

Black Excellence
Meeting Notes on 4/30/19
Meeting #5
JC Wright Middle School (LMC)

We had 16 parents, staff and community members attend the meeting and one (1) student.

Racial representation of attendees *appeared* to be: 12 Black, 1 Multiracial, 1 Asian and 3 White.

12 of 17 attendees have attended before.

Attendees represented Chavez, Crestwood, Mendota, Thoreau, Lapham, Cherokee, JC Wright, West, Jefferson, Sennett, East, West and La Follette, UW Madison, Freedom Inc.

Purpose of the meeting:

- Build community with one another
- Learn about MMSD efforts to recruit and retain diverse staff
- Make emerging recommendations regarding hiring efforts

The group follows these **Group Values & Agreements:**

- Confidentiality – take what you learn and protect the personal information
- Be solution focused
- Assume positive intentions with people
- Speak your truth without apology
- Keep Black students at the center
- Share air time
- Center Black voices
- White fragility will not derail the conversation

The District's Efforts with Human Resources and Hiring Diverse Staff

The Executive Director of MMSD Human Resources was present with two other staff from the Human Resources Department. A PowerPoint was used to illustrate the efforts that the Human Resources department has made to attract, develop and retain employees.

Highlights included:

- Some of the early work in the Human Resources (H.R.) department under Deirdre Hargrove's leadership was internally focused. She described what she faced as a bit of the "Wild Wild West," and needed to get the "house in order." She shared that when she arrived (in 2015?) schools were hiring the ways they wanted and the H.R. Department did not have common expectations for hiring.
- Over the past few years, the H.R. Department has changed the interview and selection process to become more competency based (what can an applicant demonstrate); they have increased the beginner teacher pay (to be more competitive); they have moved the hiring timeline up so that they can compete for talented applicants earlier; they have revised marketing materials for recruitment; invested in the Grow Our Own program.
- MMSD has now hired a recruiter and he was at the meeting.
- They reported there are currently **360 Teachers of Color**. Teachers of Color does not mean exclusively Black teachers, it is inclusive of all staff who have a teachers' contract (English as a Second Language teachers, Bilingual Resource Teachers, Counselors, Psychologists, Special Education Teachers and classroom teachers).
- There are currently **100 Black staff with a teachers' contracts** (this does not include support staff to classrooms like Behavior Education Assistants, Special Education Assistants)
- If the teaching staff were to mirror the student demographics, Human Resources has set a goal of needing 1,500 teachers of color, which would be approximately 55% of all teachers in the District (2,700 teachers).

Questions and Comments from the group

1. *(After looking at the data on separation from the District by Race/Ethnicity)- Where are staff of Color going and why? Have you done Exit Interviews to better understand what is happening?*

The response from H. R. was that there is anecdotal information about micro-aggressions, racism and feelings of isolation. The Human Resources Department is planning to create a resignation site to capture information about why people are leaving the District. In addition, the department would like to conduct "stay" interviews with staff of Color to find out the reasons why they are staying in MMSD. This would help the District become more proactive.

2. *What is the average tenure for Teachers of Color?*

Human Resources said they could get that information.

3. *What recruitment strategies have worked the best to get staff of Color here?*

Human Resources said that they must have a multi-prong approach. They shared that direct recruitment to students enrolled in Schools of Education programs is actually hard to do via email or direct mail because student data is nearly impossible to access due to student privacy. Primary recruitment strategies to current and graduating college students majoring in Education is primarily through recruitment fairs. Yet, that will not be enough. The H.R. department also knows they need to invest in “grow your own” programs and work all of the other strategies like salary, getting outside of Madison to market the District and being competitive.

Human Resources also shared that one of the challenges in recruiting staff from out of state to MMSD is the Wisconsin certification through the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has been very challenging for newly hired staff. Apparently, it is hard to get certified, especially when staff from other states are hired with the requirement to gain the certification within a short amount of time to maintain their position. MMSD has been looking at alternatives to licensure to address this issue. They suggested that the Coalition might want to meet with DPI in the future.

4. *[in response to recruitment] -How do you plan to sell Madison?*

The newly hired MMSD Recruiter Najjah Thompson (Black male educator), said that the Strategic Framework and what MMSD stands for will be attractive for some applicants who want to work in an urban district. Human Resources also said that a welcoming community in Madison is also needed for staff of Color. As it was stated, MMSD can do its part but the

District needs the help of others in the community. Someone mentioned that the MMSD Recruiter should also collaborate with Principals of Color in recruitment efforts.

5. *[in response to talent development] What is the development and training of staff? How do they get feedback?*

Human Resources talked about their collaboration with the Professional Learning department. They also said another important component is performance management. One community member asked “how does MMSD identify anti-blackness in our practices and policies. For example, even if a Black teacher is in the classroom but the standard is Whiteness, how does this actually make a real different for students?” Another person in the group who recently moved to Madison from Texas commented in agreement “This is one of the racist places I have ever lived and even Black folks don’t speak to one another here, so I agree with this.”

What will accountability look like for hiring, retaining and developing teachers/staff of Color in MMSD?

- Everyone present felt that having a report on retention rates for Teachers of color and specifically Black teachers was important to see.
 - In addition, it was suggested that length of tenure and exit information is also important to collect and share out with the public.
-

Black Excellence
Meeting Notes on 5/09/2019
Meeting #6
JC Wright Middle School (LMC)

We had 13 parents and staff attend the meeting.

Racial representation of attendees *appeared* to be: 13 Black

8 of 13 attendees have attended before.

Parents represented Shorewood, JC Wright, West, Sennett, Spring Harbor, Memorial,

Purpose of the meeting:

- Build community with one another
- Hear and discuss the District's proposed budget for 2019-2020
- Give feedback regarding Strategic Equity Priorities – especially Black Excellence

The group follows these **Group Values & Agreements:**

- Confidentiality – take what you learn and protect the personal information
- Be solution focused
- Assume positive intentions with people
- Speak your truth without apology
- Keep Black students at the center
- Share air time
- Center Black voices
- White fragility will not derail the conversation

Proposed Budget for 2019-2020

The Chief Financial Officer for MMSD was present to discuss the drafted preliminary 2019-2020 budget. A PowerPoint was used to illustrate the budget. Kelly Ruppel, CFO, explained that she wanted to get our feedback on the Strategic Equity priorities.

Revenue Forecast for 2019-2020

- The revenue from the State is still unknown, but the MMSD budget is built on \$100 per pupil revenue limit, which will result in \$2.7 million dollars
- We will have \$8 million from the November 2016 Referendum for Operating expenses in 2019-2020

This results in **\$10.7 in new revenue** and \$418 million in total operating revenue.

Expenses for 2019-2020

It was explained that of the \$10.7 million in new revenue:

- \$6.5 million will be paid in salary increases to staff (average 2.5% increase)
- \$2.5 million will be paid to increases in health care costs for employees
- \$1.2 million will be paid to new independent charter schools (and/or voucher programs outside of MMSD).

This leaves \$500,000 for the rest of the District costs.

Staffing Plan

- It was explained that MMSD has a class size policy and the goal is to minimize both the low and high ends of class sizes. This means there are classes with fewer students than the policy and classes with students who exceed the policy. The goal is to get closer to the policy.
- There will be more investments in Cross-Categorical Teachers, Psychologists, Social Workers and Counselors.
- There will be an overall staffing decrease of 1% based on declines in student enrollment:
 - Teachers in 2018-19 = 2,659 / in 2019-20 = 2,628
 - Education Assistants in 2018-19 = 440.7 / in 2019-2020 = 435.5
 - Food Service in 2018-19 = 104.2 / in 2019-20 = 96.0

Comments about staffing

- “Overall, I don’t think the District should cut teachers.”
- “Smaller classrooms are more effective”

- “How are increases in Psychologists, Social Workers and Counselors” handled? Are they going to middle and high schools?”
- “Is there a commitment to diversity in these new positions?” That’s what we need!
- “What about the ways that Counselors impact students? It is the interpersonal skills”

The CFO explained that MMSD has the smallest class ratios in the area. She also stated that MMSD is not increasing class size, rather, re-setting the class size ratio at the elementary level. She also shared that Human Resources is dedicated to diversifying the staff and they could better discuss that.

Black Excellence Community Coalition Fund

There is a proposed commitment of \$250,000 of recurring Community Service Funding (also called Fund 80) for the Black Excellence Coalition to identify the community assets they wish to invest in and areas of expansion. The CFO wanted to know if this amount seemed to be enough and/or if the funding source would be considered too restrictive.

More about Fund 80

Fund 80 / Community Services funding was explained in more detail:

- The funds are not to be used to supplement core instruction during the day
- Funds are to be used for non-school specific activities, that in theory can be open to anyone in the Madison community
- Example of Fund 80 is Madison Schools Community Recreation (MSCR) which operates before school, after school and in the community programs.
- These funds often can be used to support community organizations.

Nichelle Nichols (with MMSD) who is convening the Black Excellence Coalition meetings also shared with the group that when the budget was presented to the Board of Education, the Superintendent had stated that these Black Excellence Funds would likely support “already existing programs in the community that serve Black students.” Nichols asked the CFO if the

Coalition is empowered to make recommendations on ways to spend the funds or to identify new things they think are critical, how they might go about that if the funds already seemed designated for existing programs. The CFO mentioned that things were not tied down and this was the feedback she needed to hear.

Comments about Black Excellence Fund

- “What portion of the MSCR budget is currently funded by Fund 80?” [answer: 75%]
- “Who is currently getting Fund 80 funding?” [answer: we could pull that list together]
- “How is it decided what programs are offered in Fund 80 now? This is more of a question about MSCR – how do they decide on the programs?” [answer: They ask students about their interests, they work with adults who want to sponsor clubs. We could have MSCR come out and talk to this group.”]
- “I’m curious, what is the annual allocation for Advanced Learning? What do they get and how does it compare to what is being proposed to Black Excellence?” [answer: we could look that up]
- “What are the outcomes for learning and academic achievement with Fund 80? Does it all have to be after-school clubs and recreation? [answer: academic achievement is not tied to Fund 80, but can include academic programs if we desire]
- “I’m wondering – how far is \$250,000 really going to go? It’s a good start”
- “Will these funds be sustained year after year? This is not enough” [answer: yes the plan is to sustain these funds]
- “I think it may be better to focus on a few sites, take a concentrated approach to get more bang for the buck. You won’t get real impact with \$250,000 spread over too many programs.”

Ideas that emerged on Black Excellence Funds

- Financial literacy for high school students – real world stuff.
- College planning. Too many kids don’t have the opportunities to get help with college planning.
- We need rites of passage type programs – something to help our girls and boys move into young adulthood.

- We need more intra-Diaspora community building. We have a lot of African students who identify as Black but not African American and there should be more opportunities to bring the Diaspora of Black people together.
- I think our males need focus. I see issues with low self-esteem, lack of understanding about who they are.
- There is also an issues with our girls fighting and healthy girl identity.
- We need a plan for more social interactions for high school students and middle school students.
- Some kids really benefit from sports. We need more access to sports for some of our kids.

Other Strategic Equity Priorities in the 2019-2020 Budget

Accelerated licensure in Special Education (\$121,000 + Director at .25FTE for \$34,000)

It was explained that MMSD has a high need in the Special Education field and this priority helps to accelerate licensure for Cross-Categorical teachers in Special Education in partnership with UW-Madison.

Comments about accelerated licensure in Special Education

- “This should be an opportunity to recruit new teachers of Color. The branding of this should be it’s an Urban Special Education Accelerated Licensure. You could find more teachers who want to be in an urban district.”
- “I think it’s a good investment.”
- “But overall if there is a shortage in the classroom, is there a way to build from volunteers who want to work in the field and recruit them?”
- “UW Madison School of Education has its own equity issues – why isn’t the District looking at other sources?”

Additional Strategic Equity Priorities

Social Worker Feeder Pattern Pilot (\$87,000)

Expansion of mental health supports in schools (\$116,400)

Behavior Education Plan training and school support in restorative justice, developmental design and school specific culture and climate (\$200,000)

Comments about these priorities:

- “I would like to know more about which feeder pattern.”
- “Yes to mental health supports!”
- “What is the plan to help with our kids fighting? It doesn’t seem fair that the Principal has to figure out how to find the resources on their own.”
- “Why can’t the District invest more in Parent Liaisons instead of one social worker across an entire feeder pattern?”
- “All of these are a bunch of good ideas, but if the District hired more teachers of color we wouldn’t need all of these different investments. Hire more teachers of color.”

Additional Budget Priorities

We did not have adequate time to address all of the other priorities, but the CFO shared briefly:

- Early College STEM Academy expansion \$200,000
- Adding more students to MicroSchool \$325,000
- Expand Advanced Learning Specialists allocation at four schools (2.0 FTE), one new position to coordinate advanced programming at the secondary level; new professional development at K-2 grades (\$50,000) and continue to consult with Equal Opportunity Schools (\$75,000) to make sure students of Color get into Advanced Placement classes and succeed.

Next Steps

We concluded the meeting about the budget by sharing with the CFO

- 1.) We were not sure that \$250,000 was enough but a good start
- 2.) We did not necessarily agree that the \$250,000 should go to existing programs

- 3.) We might like to recommend that some of the funds be designated for programming that can happen during the school day and not be limited to the Fund 80 guidelines
- 4.) We had a brainstorm session about some ideas tonight but did not want to be locked into those

The MMSD Budget and Planning website states the following:

The 2019-20 revenue from the State has not yet been determined. Our draft budget, assumes a nominal increase to our revenue authority providing us with limited flexibility. However, we are committed to ensuring our budget is aligned with our Strategic Framework priorities, including our focused beliefs on [Black Excellence](#). In this budget, you'll see several proposed strategic investments, aimed at accelerating results for youth of color. These investments include:

- \$425,000 to expand the number of dual enrollment seats in the Early College STEM Academy at Madison College, which focuses on getting more youth of color and women into post-secondary education and the STEM field
 - \$380,000 to increase access to advanced learning for youth of color
 - \$530,000 in school-based Psychologists and Social Workers
 - \$320,000 for MicroSchool options for youth re-engagement with a specific focus on those high school students who are most at risk of not graduating
 - \$50,000 in funding for restorative justice efforts, including training and research of different models through our existing community partnerships to support accelerated restorative justice system development in all schools
-

Black Excellence
Meeting Notes on 5/14/2019
Meeting #7
Goodman Community Center (Lau Room)

We had 11 parents and staff attend the meeting.

Racial representation of attendees *appeared* to be: 8 Black, 3 White

5 of 11 attendees have attended before.

Parents represented Lowell, Hawthorne, Mendota, Schenk, Badger Rock, Jefferson, Mendota, West, Sennett, Spring Harbor, Memorial,

Purpose of the meeting:

- Build community with one another
- Review the notes shared from the Protecting Our Children meeting notes from 2/23/2019
- Determine what recommendations we think should be added to our recommendations

The group follows these **Group Values & Agreements:**

- Confidentiality – take what you learn and protect the personal information
- Be solution focused
- Assume positive intentions with people
- Speak your truth without apology
- Keep Black students at the center
- Share air time
- Center Black voices
- White fragility will not derail the conversation

Meeting Notes from Protecting Our Children Meeting on 2/23/19

Printed copies of the notes from the Protecting Our Children town hall meeting on 2/23/19 were distributed to the group. Notes were available through the Progress Center for Black Women Facebook page (in a Google document). We used the printed notes to work in two small groups to highlight recommendations that we might want to push forward.

Major Categories of Issues in Notes

The notes from the February community meeting showed the following:

- **Overt racism** – this was cited **19 times** by parents in attendance at that meeting. Examples listed: racial slurs, bullying of Black students by teachers, tokenism, abusive treatment by bus aides, white supremacy, anti-blackness dress code (particularly Black girls bodies), institutional/systemic racism is affecting our kids and post-incident retaliation of students by teachers.
- **Teacher issues** – this was cited **14 times** by parents in attendance at that meeting. Examples listed: lack of Black teachers, Black staff not supported, teachers are poorly paid and trained, need for coaching and leadership on anti-racism, teachers take things personally (blind spots), “whitesplaining” (history teachers on topics of slavery, civil rights movement), bias in grading, “breaking the will of Black kids – spirit killing.”
- **Student issues** – this was cited **13 times** by parents in attendance at that meeting. Examples listed: anxiety/panic attacks, boredom, feelings of invisibility.
- **Administration problems in schools** – this was cited **12 times** by parents in attendance at that meeting. Examples listed: students of color disproportionately on IEPs, lack of transparency in communication, hyper-focus on “optics” rather than addressing root cause of problems, no accountability, centralization of power and authority at district staff
- **Policing** – this was cited **12 times** by parents in attendance at that meeting. Examples listed: intervention/over-policing of Black children, police presence in schools, threats of arrest, police in schools support status quo, surveillance, disrespectful treatment/targeting kids of color
- **Segregation and disparities** – this was cited **11 times** by parents in attendance at that meeting. Examples listed: segregation among students and teachers, cultural/academic segregation, the achievement gap, labeling Black children as violent/not smart, Black staff are primarily in lower paid positions – not teachers or administrators, Black parents are overburdened by the level of involvement needed to ensure their kids are well treated, lower expectations for students of color, Black students don’t get into Dual Language programs (DLI) in schools.

Other categories included parent issues, over-punishment, not listening, lack of programs.

Solutions from the Protecting Our Children Meeting on 2/23/19

We reviewed many of the solutions that parents generated that day, which included:

- Attend Board of Education meetings and email School Board
- Hold MTI accountable
- Support Freedom Inc. demands
- Whistleblower protection for students, staff, parents
- Get police out of schools
- IEP reviews / IEP experts to support parents during meetings
- Tracking physical brutality
- Staff/teacher diversity
- Connect with lawyers and get changes in the policy
- Trauma informed care
- Visiting classrooms / have allies go to
- Mental health support / trauma informed care
- A support group to help parents who struggle with children who have behaviors
- Create, support and allocated funds with affinity groups and restorative justice
- Advocacy for children
- Family resources for supportive services
- Fundraising / funding for people to advocate / fund legal
- White allies
- Accountability
- Diversity training for teachers/schools
- Organize a “know your rights” trainings
- Workshops for parents to explain IEPs
- Training in anti-racist actions

- Let elected officials know we care about this

Black Excellence Coalition Recommendations

Group 1:

What solutions will seem to have the most significant impact?

- Diversify our workforce / school staff
- Hold Human Resources accountable for a performance management system
- Flood the Professional Development plan with race and equity work (not opt-in)

What needs to move forward as recommendations?

- How does Black Excellence live in every plan and policy in the District? We want to see it.
- Accountability top down and bottom up
- Curriculum / teacher lessons
- We want to know more about hiring efforts, onboarding, retention with staff
- Trauma informed care that is culturally sensitive for ALL staff, not just the required positions.

Group 2:

What solutions will seem to have the most significant impact?

- Education and training for teachers on how to differentiate their instruction
- Curriculum
- Address school structures

This group stated there was obviously “a dis-connect between teachers and students” in the classroom. Students with disabilities (IEPs) and students who need more challenge and are advanced learners are on both ends of a continuum. They stated that the majority of teachers teach to the “middle” because they do not know how to differentiate instruction for all of the learners in their classroom. They felt this would address many of the issues they saw in the Protecting Our Children notes.

What needs to move forward as recommendations?

- Professional learning on differentiation of instruction for teachers. They need to know how to teach for the variety of learners on the continuum.
- We need all of this – need radical change.

Summary

1. There is a real need for teachers to have more professional learning and coaching on how to differentiate instruction for all learners in their classrooms. People felt this is needed and will contribute to Black Excellence because we will have fewer Black students disengaged in the classroom.
2. There must be radically different experiences that bring out the humanity of each other. Stop using Black children as data points. People need relationships!
3. Racial Equity Professional Learning must get to classroom teachers and be mandatory. There must be accountability.
4. The District has to focus on recruitment, onboarding and retention strategies for teachers/staff of Color.
5. Black Excellence should live in every plan & policy of the District.
6. There needs to be a focus on curriculum and teacher lessons. Get Black Excellence inside classrooms.
7. All staff need to be trained in Trauma Informed Care.

June meetings of Black Excellence Coalition and Think Tank were focused on formulating and refining the recommendations in this report.

Black Excellence Coalition Meeting – June 6

Black Excellence Think Tank – June 5

Black Educators Network, Coalition, Think Tank, Freedom Inc. – June 17



EQT by Design: MMSD Report

Neighborhood-Centered Engagement Sessions Supporting MMSD Strategic Framework

April 6, 2018

Prepared by Annette Miller, CEO, EQT by Design



Design thinking
for inclusive, equitable,
people-centered outcomes.



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EQT by Design: MMSD Report

Neighborhood-Centered Engagement Sessions Supporting MMSD Strategic Framework

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I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND: WHAT EQT BY DESIGN WAS HIRED TO DO

EQT by Design™ (EQT) was hired to assess current MMSD engagement processes, and then to design and develop a strategy that will help build upon the current engagement efforts in place to reach households of varying diverse backgrounds. This assistance allowed the Executive Director of Family, Youth and Community Engagement to focus on other areas of work that support the MMSD Strategic Framework.

The overall goal of this project was to establish five (5) engagement sessions between September and January (2017-18). These sessions would feed into a larger process of listening and learning planned by MMSD as part of the overall Strategic Framework. The feedback from these sessions would feed into the next phase of the process.

In February 2018, the Superintendent would schedule a feedback session to share back what she heard to gain support and endorsement of the new five-year strategic framework, and tighten any ideas learned from these engagement sessions. The school board will then review and signal if the district can keep moving forward.

In spring 2018, a planning group would be convened to develop the next version of the MMSD Strategic Framework. The group will meet through the fall and seek final approval from the Board of Education in time to launch the new Strategic Framework in August/September 2018.

About EQT by Design

EQT By Design™ is a Madison, Wisconsin-based business founded by Annette Miller, CEO. The foundational belief of EQT by Design is that success is, by design, relationships and networks with connected, engaged and diverse community members. Our strength lies in connecting and bridging perspectives made up of racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse community members, as well as other intersectionalities.

Ms. Miller has 25+ years of strong professional policy and analytic skills, a wide network of community, government and business relationships, and extensive networks within Madison and Dane County's diverse populations. She has worked across multiple industry areas as a strong connector between community, business, government and nonprofits. This results in developing and implementing ideas and strategies that are inclusive, resilient and evolve into a strong community backbone.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report showcases the engagement sessions that were held to target underrepresented households reflecting African American, Latino, Hmong, and youth perspectives. These sessions took place between November 2017 and January 2018.

Seven (7) high-level recommendations from these sessions are noted below in this Executive Summary. These are followed in the body of the report with a deeper level of explanation for the recommendations, with the remainder of the report delineating the elements involved in development of these recommendations. These elements include detailed information on the EQT by Design process structure for MMSD engagement sessions; engagement group demographics; and session-specific information.

EQT High-Level Recommendations

Strategic Framework Recommendations

1. New Strategic Framework needs to be accountable to communities and households of color.
2. Provide additional opportunities for the participants to remain involved in the Strategic Framework process, and/or in MMSD advisory groups.

Family, Youth and Community Engagement Recommendations

3. Accountability: Family, Youth and Community Engagement should ensure that structurally embedded policies are not perpetuating practices that separate, segregate, or exclude the voice of families, students, and community across and between other parts of the MMSD district.

MMSD General Recommendations

4. MMSD commits district time to an engagement process focused on “involve and collaborate.”
5. MMSD diverse staff should be leveraged more effectively as they are critical to the engagement of families.
6. Continue to focus on accessible language, and develop marketing that is customized for parents, students, and community.
7. Change and disrupt the educational experience of English Language Learners.

III. EQT BY DESIGN PROCESS FOR MMSD ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS 2017-2018

A. Process Review

After review of the MMSD Strategic Framework Listening and Learning session design, and with a deeper understanding regarding the scope of work, I offer the following for consideration. MMSD's goal is to obtain engagement from families of color that are difficult to connect with and seek input from.

Typically, when households are not engaged or connected in the way an organization would desire this can be indicative that the organization's methods are not compatible to the targeted groups they seek to engage. Examples of what this might look like include:

- The ask does not resonate or connect
- The right delivery method is not in place

Ultimately, it matters how you ask, it matters who makes the ask, and logistics matter with regard to what is contained in the ask.

Households are disengaged

Households are skeptical, believe they have been in these processes before and don't expect much, and do not trust that their time will be valued, honored, respected or heard. Moreover, these families and households have experienced real harm to their families and children due to oppressive structural and systemic racism.

Time, intentionality, patience, and resources are required to draw these families and households into the process. This requires a design and format that will resonate and keep them participating. An engagement process that is successful needs to involve and demonstrate collaboration of the intended parties the organization seeks to engage.

Typically, this means that the process offered to these households includes:

Respect and authenticity

- Clear capture of ideas
- Easily and visibly seen reflection of ideas
- Continued engagement after the public engagement process

Culturally relevant and inclusive practices

- Accountable and accessible relationships that connect with the households
- Approachable language the audience relates to

- Reflects the concerns and solutions from the audience perspective

Results oriented

- Outcomes and impacts that are tangible and material to the households or communities

After review of the script, discussion questions, and process for households, families and community members, EQT recommended that the current design and methodology of MMSD's listening and learning sessions be designed differently.

The current design of the process relied on is the “inform/consult” model (see Exhibit 1, below). This is a model that is commonly used in most public participation efforts. It is successful if the participants are already actively engaged and understand the process and systems of engagement.

The households that MMSD is trying to engage do not fit the “inform/consult” criteria. To connect, engage and have a sustained relationship these households need a “collaborate” approach (preferred) but an “involve” approach can be a solid strategy as well.

Exhibit 1

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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B. Engagement Design by EQT

EQT co-created the following design for the workshop sessions to ensure that the reach and engagement of “involve” and “collaborate” could be a reality for this process. This table summarizes the overall process and the results and outcomes for each targeted constituency engaged through partnership with the neighborhood centers.

There were four targeted school-connected constituencies that MMSD wanted to ensure were included in the MMSD Strategic Framework process. Latino, youth, Hmong, and African American groups were the focus of these sessions. These groups were recruited through a partnership with area neighborhood centers.

1. Bayview Community Center
2. Bridge Lakepoint Waunona
3. Goodman Community Center
4. Lussier Community Education Center
5. Vera Court Community Center

The design of the sessions included specific questions for each session using a design model co-created in partnership with the neighborhood centers, the Executive Director of Family, Youth, and Community Engagement of MMSD, and EQT.

C. Goals and Outcomes for the Engagement Design

1. Break down information to make it accessible
2. Create understanding and connection with the MMSD Strategic Framework via the Annual Report
3. Create connections between students, families, community, and MMSD along with neighborhood centers
4. Open up space for participants to think, learn, and ask questions, and to share ideas for change that will inform the MMSD Strategic Framework.
5. Validate and affirm the experiences and input from students and families
6. Learn from and incorporate participant experiences in order to understand: a) what works b) what are challenges and c) how can MMSD help make students community, college and career ready.

Session Design Framework

Each group had two sessions without the Superintendent, a third session held with the superintendent, and a final session that provided a summary of what the Superintendent learned from their sessions. The following objectives reflect the protocol and design of this strategy and format.

1. The design was chosen to allow a warm up, engagement, and time for participants to understand the process.
2. Identify in advance what concerns or issues may be top of mind for the households in advance of Superintendent session.
3. Gain insight on what to expect and how to prepare for the third session and how to offer a fourth session.
4. Provide insight for the Superintendent prior to the session in preparation for engagement with the families.

The following summarizes the purpose and impact of each of the questions and related actions that occurred with the design sequence implemented for each session held.

Overall Impact of design and results

1. A warm-up question created connection amongst participants and facilitators and/or interpreter.
 - Allowed MMSD and EQT to understand who was in the room and it helped provide some demographic information.
2. Opening question regarding parent or youth connection with MMSD.
 - Gave insight as to where the connections were, with whom, and what schools were represented or who were contacts within the schools.
3. Overview of MMSD Annual Report: a high-level overview of the data that the school district reported out from the most recent annual report.
 - Created awareness for participants that there is data and reports like this are available to parents and community.
 - Opened up the door to questions and concerns the families and students.
4. Break-out into small group discussions
 - Identified questions for the group to break up and discuss,
 - Each group reported out discussion and ideas

- All the groups had the opportunity to provide feedback on the topics they did not discuss.
 - Some sessions did this work as a full group and we offered flexibility based on what each group needed for each session.
5. The MMSD feedback questionnaire was shared with some groups and briefly discussed
- This was not consistently given to each group.
 - Most struggled with the questionnaire as it was designed for MMSD; language and meaning were definitely barriers.
 - It went over better when the Superintendent or the facilitator stated what the questions were from the survey rather than them using the survey.
6. A brief overview of what to expect in the meeting with the Superintendent
- Critical because there was some anxiety and curiosity as to how to prepare.
 - All did well in responding to the superintendent and had ideas and concepts to provide.

D. Summary of Neighborhood Sessions (table)

Session	Format	Goals of Session	Workgroup Format Results
Session #1 Warm-up	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview, Participant intros - how old are kids & schools attended. 2. How do you feel connected to schools? 3. Review of Annual Report 4. Thinking and talking <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Did you know about the report b. What could the district do to help more families know about district progress? c. What excites you about what the school district is doing? d. What do you wish you could see more of? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm-up • Gain insight • Identify any hotspot topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All, except Goodman and Bayview, broke into small groups and each tackled the questions and then reported back as a large group. • Goodman did not like the group work and responded better as full group. • Bayview answered the questions as a large group each time, due to size and also to culture. It was clear they were more comfortable as a full group. They depended on each other to support and fill in blanks as needed.

Session #2 Open Up	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reviewed Notes from Session #1 and then addressed follow up questions, ideas and comments. 2. Then walked through what the Superintendent would share and prepped each group on how to prepare. 3. The format allowed the groups to brainstorm in large or small groups based on the will of the particular group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage • Prepare for Session #3 • Gain insight • Identify any hotspot topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was some concern and questions about what to expect for session with Superintendent, however, the practice and review addressed those concerns. • Session #2 followed and had the same format and flow with participants as in Session#1.
Session #3 Dialogue w/ Superintendent	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A presentation was made by the Superintendent on progress to date. 2. The Superintendent opened for questions. 3. Superintendent handed out a survey to encourage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage • Gain insight • Identify themes • Inform for a 4th session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The session held in Spanish for those whose first language is Spanish handled the sessions the best and participated the most. • The youth sessions were solid in their discussion and sharing with the Superintendent. The format was relaxed and not formal. • The Hmong community had the most egregious systemic issues and concerns

	<p>attendees to fill out and provide feedback.</p> <p>4. The Superintendent did present ideas she was hearing and shared them to get feedback.</p>		<p>regarding their relationship with the schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Goodman Center also had some systemic issues and concerns with the school district.
Session #4 Feedback loop by Superintendent	Superintendent provided an overview and open conversation about the results to those who came to attend this session.	<p>Allows Superintendent to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve others • Be Accountable • Keep participants engaged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latino households were the only ones present. Due to game at Kohl Center there were those who were turned away to park. It is unclear who may have tried to come but were turned away. • These logistics and the impact on attendance was unfortunate. The format and opportunity was a great way to connect and demonstrate dialogue and listening to the participants.

E. Attendee Demographics (table)

The following table summarizes the participant demographics from each of the sessions and by neighborhood center.

Location	Target Demographic	Attendees	Primary Language	Schools Represented
Bayview Community center	Hmong	8 (7 Female /1 Male) + 1 staff	Hmong	West High, Hamilton middle, and Franklin/Randall elementary schools
Bridge Lakepoint community center	Latino/Hispanic	18 (15 Female/3 Male) + 2 staff	Spanish	
Goodman Community center	African American Latino White African	13 (10 Female/3 Male) +2 staff	English	Sandburg, Schenk, Lowell, Hawthorne, Emerson elementary schools Badger Rock, O'Keefe middle schools Lafollette, East, West, Memorial, and alternative high schools
Lussier & Bayview Community centers (Youth Session)	HS Youth - African American, White, Hmong, Latino	12 (10 Female/2 Male) + 2 staff	English	Memorial and West high schools

TOTAL SESSIONS = 13
TOTAL = 51 participants
GOAL = 75 participants

F. Engagement Session Observations by Demographic Group

Each session had similar and also unique experiences in their sessions. Follows is a brief summary of what EQT believes should be considered as next steps based on each demographic group that had a session.

I. Spanish

- A. This group takes their work very seriously and are significantly engaged.
- B. I highly recommend that this group be considered for ongoing engagement with MMSD.
- C. They are very knowledgeable and informed and want to engage.

II. Goodman

- A. This group was very skeptical and have had challenges with their schools, particularly since their kids are kids of color.
- B. This group should be kept in mind when thinking about accountability and closing existing gaps.
- C. They are a knowledgeable group who had many examples of interactions with the school district that were informative.

III. Youth

- A. I highly recommend that this group be considered for ongoing engagement with MMSD.
- B. They are very knowledgeable and informed, and want to engage. Can they be a part of changes that were suggested under #3 under PTO?
 - 1. Can students be a part of re-aligning how the Student Government compared to Affinity Groups like BSU, Latino Unidos, LGBTQ are designed and impacting or carrying the voices of the students.
 - 2. Phase out the old model and phase in a hybrid model that more accurately reflects how groups are finding voice and how that can feed in to the school itself in terms of governance, and the District.

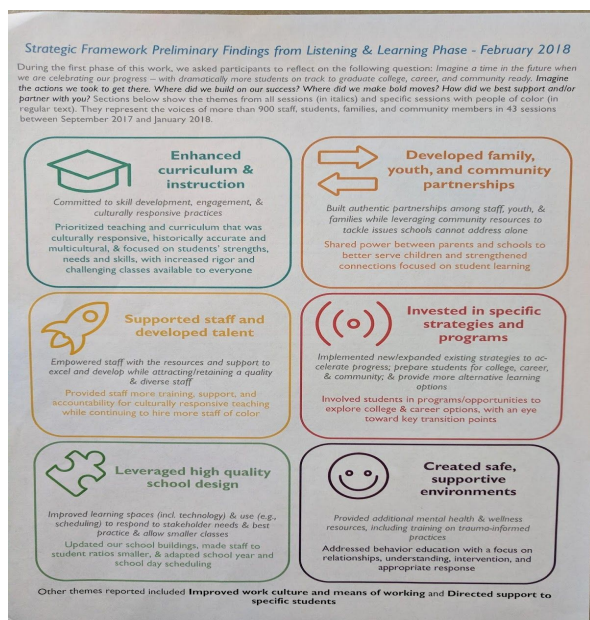
IV. Hmong

- A. This group has been significantly marginalized and they should be the demographic to keep front and center to close real and significant gaps.
- B. I highly recommend that this group be considered as a focus intervention to ensure that the needs of the Hmong families and households are addressed.
- C. Best practices from that focus would be instrumental and transferable to how other cultural groups fare in the system but not to the same degree as this group.
- D. It can be ideal for determining how to address incoming linguistic groups that are also small but with this type of focus there may be ways to address and make a weak link an opportunity for innovation and leadership.

- E. They are very knowledgeable and informed, and want to engage. Seeking ways to allow their voices to be a part of the solution may be instrumental in developing engagement and giving respect back to a group that, due to language and cultural barriers, have struggled to find bridges that allow them to feel included and part of the school community.

IV. Engagement Session Conclusions

The design approach implemented was successful and the overall goals of the sessions were accomplished: to make information accessible; to create engagement and connection; to open up space for participants to think, learn, and ask questions; to validate, affirm and hear student and family experiences; and lastly, to learn from and incorporate participant feedback into the MMSD strategic framework process. EQT By Design captured ideas and comments in addition to what was recording by the school district at the engagement session. They can be found in Appendix B at the end of this report.



MMSD prepared a summary of findings for the Board of Education reflecting the input from the listening and learning sessions phase of the engagement process including the sessions by EQT and the district. EQT reviewed the summary and found that the items stated in regular text within the preliminary findings (Exhibit 2) mirrors the general consensus of the groups engaged in this process.

In particular the sessions held by EQT found the following key points from the report particularly important and heard repeated from all the sessions:

"Prioritizing teaching and curriculum that is culturally responsive, historically accurate and focuses on student strengths ... and challenging classes"

MMSD Preliminary Findings - Feb 2018 (Exhibit 2)

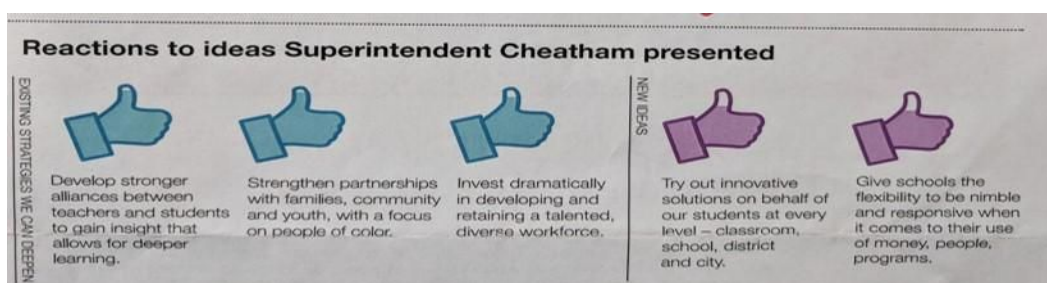
"...Shared power between parents and schools ... and focused on student learning"

Safety in general, and with a critical eye to "...behavior education and a focus on relationships, understanding, intervention..."

The MMSD generated another summary report that was based on input from the different constituency communities including community; this report gives an indication on the direction the school district may go in light of what they have learned.

EQT's reaction and response to that particular report is that attendees were challenged and found it difficult to engage with the Superintendent's new ideas (reflected in Exhibit 3, below). As demonstrated in the graphic, there was a lower approval response to "new ideas" compared with the approval responses to "existing strategies."

It is the opinion of EQT that this lower response is due to the barriers these attendees experience right now and it challenges their ability to appreciate what the school district has already been striving to do. These participants are reluctant to consider "new ideas" ([Exhibit 3, below) when there is much more work needed and required for "existing strategies."



Reactions to Superintendent Cheatham (Exhibit 3)

Participants feel that existing strategies require more time, persistence, and commitment to ensure that the results get to the students and parents who have been impacted and hindered by the institutional and structural racism and other barriers being acknowledged and addressed by the community, the school district, the Superintendent, her leadership team and Board of Education.

V. EQT BY DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of this process design assessment, MMSD asked for reflections, ideas and opportunities about both the Strategic Framework and about the District generally, based on what was learned from these sessions. The following insights from EQT informed by comments, observations, and overall impact and results of sessions implemented and shared with EQT.

Areas to be aware of and to consider in next phases of the Strategic Framework process and/or as a District:

Strategic Framework Recommendations

1. New Strategic Framework needs to be accountable to communities and households of color.

- a. Households and students of color have been negatively impacted by school measures and outcomes. The district needs to deliver on their promise to the public by ensuring that they are addressing concerns shared in this process.
- b. Ask for and implement ways to help community work together and engage:
 - i. This could be a key to addressing how to help students, parents, and community work together around cultural inclusion through collaborative engagement; it could also be a key to innovation and a new way to perceive the role of schools.
 - ii. Create an intentionally scaled up process to invite parents and community to work together and differently to obtain the shared views and vision they have about their schools.

2. Provide additional opportunities for the participants to remain involved in the Strategic Framework process, and/or in MMSD advisory groups.

- a. Cultivate families' aspirations for their schools by including them actively in the process.
- b. Think about ways in which the schools, students, parents and communities are invited to highlight and showcase the wins of the District rather than the district showcasing its own wins. The impact will be more far reaching and have more psychological weight in how the broader community thinks about the district.
- c. The key is to generate new systems that are more inclusive and reflective on how today's parents, students, and communities want to promote and share how they are all doing at the district and the role the district has in making an impact.
- d. Consider revamping the parent teacher groups.

- i. Specifically, create affinity groups within the schools of traditionally underrepresented groups including students. Run these parallel with PTO, and then transition away from PTO to have these new revamped groups co-create a new version and model of a “parent, teacher, student, school collaborative” that is inclusive of the voices and perspectives relevant for today’s needs and of those in the schools.
- ii. It is fine if the affinity groups decide to stay if it helps develop the voice of the groups and still allows the collaborative to be the space for ALL voices and allows the school to hear and learn from its learning community.

Family, Youth and Community Engagement Recommendations

3. Accountability: Family, Youth and Community Engagement could have a vital role in ensuring cohesion between families, students, and community interfaces and MMSD.

- a. It was observed that there were instances when parents and community were impacted by structurally embedded systems perpetuating practices that separate, segregate, or exclude the voice of families, students, and community across and between other parts of the MMSD district.
 - i. This was most obvious with the Hmong community members; however, the other sessions also revealed this in their experiences too.
 - ii. The most significant issue was accountability. There were instances cited where needs were not met but determining or seeking resolution was challenging and it was difficult for participants in these sessions to know (easily and clearly) who is accountable or responsible for fixing the issue(s).
- b. Families in need find their resources are inefficient and/or resources are offered that seem stressed; communication gaps exist between district business groups and how they provide or offer support; and the direct service at schools (or, SOME schools) to parents and families in need are inefficient and/or non-existent.
- c. Technology may not be the best solution. Ensuring that staff and systems are designed to be streamlined, cohesive and symbiotic will be critical to ensuring these diverse community groups obtain the services they need with more rigor is paramount to setting the table in preparation both for today and for 2040 -- as it is already upon us!
- d. This is an important area to invest in and change significantly.

4. Commit district time to an engagement process focused on “involve and collaborate.”

- a. Ultimately, the main reason why these households are difficult to engage is because they do not “assimilate” to the mainstream systems, practices, and protocols of how to engage with the district.
 - i. Over time, this issue that was once a small concern is now THE issue of concern due to demographic changes.
 - ii. An overall revamping and perspective change is necessary by all in involved to come together to redesign and reimagine what an engaged school community looks like with a very diverse and broad constituency that does not necessarily want “one way” or “a way” to engage with the schools and/or the district.
- b. Move families towards the “empower” engagement spectrum (refer to Exhibit 1).
- c. Traditional models and formats used to engage or inform need to be significantly re-designed.
 - i. Technology has helped accessibility, although the information has to be relevant, delivered in such a way that it will be received and welcomed, and of interest.
 - ii. A more significant investment made to aid in identifying ways to sustain engagement and participation of underrepresented voices is vital. This type of investment can be a key to revamp or redesign systems and processes.
- d. Loyalty, trust, and volunteering can be outcomes from participation. Offering opportunities for parents, students, and community to actively engage in identifying solutions that impact them moves engagement towards “empower.”
- e. Engaged participants can tell “your” story better and with more impact in outcomes than you can. This can reduce concerns around families moving to other districts, schools, or perpetuating disengagement.

5. MMSD diverse staff should be leveraged more effectively as they are critical to the engagement of families.

- a. Participants noted, and in particular students observed, that though the annual report promoted progress, the visible impact is small.
 - i. A total of 180 teachers of color have been hired since the start of the Strategic Plan, but these hires are spread across 53 schools in the District (basically 3 hires per school).
 - ii. Diverse hires of Principals are more highly visible.

- iii. The visibility of diverse hires of teachers doesn't translate for students in the classroom.
 - iv. Students also noted that in schools where there are diverse staff hires, they are often in positions of limited power or decision-making roles (examples: student educational assistants, volunteers).
- b. Actively and intentionally bring MMSD diverse leadership and staff to parent, student, and community events. It is actions such as these that reaffirm the progress of the Strategic Framework.
 - i. Consistent highlighting of diverse school staff acknowledges their important role in change and affirms representation, and signals the change throughout the MMSD district.
 - ii. Disengaged households can benefit from these connections which are closer to them.
 - iii. Diversity in Principals, teachers, or other staff team members at the school, along with parent liaisons, can help to ensure a balance in voice especially when dealing with complex or cultural competency and equity issues and concerns.

6. Continue to focus on accessible language, develop marketing that is customized for parents, students, and community.

- a. Customization and accessibility are critical for engagement of parents, students and community.
 - i. Many participants indicated that their networks were keeping them informed or answering their questions (versus obtaining information directly from the schools or the district). This means a third party is telling and sharing information that may or may not be accurate or correct.
 - ii. Many participants were just not aware of what is happening in their schools and in the district due to disengagement as well as not having information customized, which helps them want to know and learn, or stay aware of progress.
 - 1. This was particularly true for the Hmong and African American households.
- b. Customization and accessibility impacts delivery of district success. Accessibility also means that parent and student communities may take in information better if the messenger looks like them, talks like them, and most importantly can relate to them while delivering the messaging.
- c. This can improve messaging dissemination as the parents and families become willing partners to get the word out about their schools and the impact.

- d. External communication and engagement about school progress is recommended to be presented in the language and perspective of the students, family, and community. Use education-related progress, reports, and updates internally only for education-related staff, and Board of Education.
- e. It is highly recommended that the words of teachers, students, and community be in the quotes and in the work of District moving forward. This shows participants they were listened and responded to (this reinforces recommendation #2).
 - i. A great example is the report presented as “preliminary findings February 2018.” Highlighting what was consensus and what was specifically shared by communities of color should be repeated, and used more often in marketing and messaging that comes out of the district.
 - ii. Customizing by school is also a good idea if a lot of the flexibility and ideation is going to come out of the schools and from principals as is being considered. Again, putting the language out there that highlights and showcases the specific demographics and desires from that particular school community can be very proactive and instrumental in how others respond and perceive effort and change.

7. Change and disrupt the educational experience of English Language Learners

- a. Language is a barrier: In observing the session logistics and the households with language needs, it is EQT’s observation that the District has gaps in how it communicates “easily” with other cultural groups beyond English.
- b. The Hmong community saw the most significant language gaps. Student progress, development and their parents being informed about progress, or educated about the District, or school, is significantly compromised as shared by this focus group.
 - i. Even if they can navigate the system, the system does not allow easy navigation by phone, email, or in person, due to limited people and systems, and investment gaps.
 - ii. Accountability and effectiveness of Hmong services should be reviewed and assessed, particularly, in looking at current investments and strategies in place for Hmong families and students.
 - 1. Specifically, there were several examples shared in which parents recounted how Hmong support staff were not responsive or not responsive in ways that were easing burdens or addressing gaps designed to be fixed as a result of having designated staff who are not culturally and linguistically competent.

Questions to be considered:

1. Is the system design right for the need and/or is the right staff person (s) assigned the right staff or support?
 2. Are these solutions set up to fail by design? Are all in the decision-making process being held accountable for the successes and/or failures?
- c. The student is burdened by these gaps. Students who have non-native English speakers for parents may also be perpetuating the gap in systems and connections to their families. This occurs because they do not want their parents present or engaged as the burden is then placed on them as the “family member” to fill those gaps. This then does not allow them to be the “student” and have the moment be about their needs for success and progress as they are operating as the system fix.
1. Caution: It is also true that students, once they hit middle and high school, hit the awkward stage that occurs between parents and students; to have it exacerbated by inadequate systems of support is compounding the problem.
- d. Language barriers are a weak link that can be the judge and jury on how folks look at organizations and systems particularly since diversity is on the radar today and where MMSD is trying to make important changes.
- e. Spanish families are also impacted by a language barrier, but not to the same degree and level as the Hmong community. Their concerns are focused on systemic issues around dual language programs, and how their children are viewed being in English Language Learner programs.
- f. English language is currently the navigation and embedded measurement of academic success. This is a deep and pervasive issues, as well as a complex issue to root out. This also impacts overall ideology around language access needs and best practices overall.
- i. This English language bias in the system, while being addressed in some ways, requires a finer lens in light of the deeply embedded ideology to review details on how the system rewards English language (and not other languages). This will take time and resources, as well as a focused commitment to root out bias and implement change from within.
 - ii. EQT ends with stating that this can be an “innovation disrupter” for the district and can be flipped into an opportunity from a magnet curriculum perspective, and/or community engagement tool, partnership tool with private or nonprofit sectors, etc.

APPENDIX A: EQT by Design Observations of Neighborhood Center Sessions

1. Spanish session - Bridge Lakepoint
 - a. The staff took the design proposed and set it up to be a group activity.
 - i. The design of the process was modified to mimic the Imagine Madison process
 - ii. The questions were translated into Spanish by staff
 - iii. Each table had four participants with a question to answer; then each table reported out to the large group
 - iv. Any additional information not already shared by others was added
 - b. The participants were willing to follow the process
 - i. They liked the format of breaking out into groups as it was familiar
 - ii. This group is very knowledgeable and aware of what happens in the schools and with their kids for those who have kids (1 attendee has no kids).
 - c. Staff at Bridge Lakepoint were very hands-on and involved in the process which made the attendance and information very rich.
 - d. Staff, due to their role in the Imagine Madison process, used their skills and insight to ensure and aid in the initial implementation of these sessions (the first to be held).
2. Youth Session - Bayview and Lussier
 - a. The design of the process was more informal and less structured.
 - i. Discussions were very conversational and based on student participation.
 - ii. The process designed for this session was modified the day of session.
 - b. Youth were willing to follow the process; however, they wanted to influence the design to make it more comfortable for how they engage in group sessions:
 - i. Introductions were upgraded to ensure gender pronoun preferences.
 - ii. One group wanted to modify a question they didn't understand.
 - c. The staff from both neighborhood centers were overall pleased and satisfied with the process.
 - i. They were very hands-on and let MMSD dictate how the design was going to unfold unlike the Spanish onsite staff who had a process in mind and were more structured.

3. Goodman Center session

The participants were willing to follow the process of group breakouts

- a. The participants liked the large group interaction best and preferred interacting as a whole with the facilitators.
- b. The group had very interesting and diverse experiences with the schools.
- c. This group was very skeptical and not really bought in to the MMSD process. They all seemed to have in common experiences that made them more skeptical and tough on both the questions and the intentions of the MMSD. This group was knowledgeable and aware of what happens in the schools and with their kids for those who have kids (1 attendee has no kids).

4. Staff were instrumental in identifying participants who were willing to be involved in the process which made the attendance and information very rich.

5. Hmong Session - Bayview Community Center / most compromised group

- a. The participants were open to the process and liked a full group format given the language barrier and comfort of working together to share input and insight.
 - i. This group was the most disengaged of the sessions held at neighborhood centers.
 - ii. Questions and getting in depth was not possible beyond the second (2nd) introductory question which was about their relationship with the school.
 - iii. This group is not knowledgeable nor aware of what happens in the schools and with their kids due to lack of bilingual resource support.
 - iv. Services and resources are not easily accessible or understood by the families and they need and rely on systems or the community to bridge gaps. Unfortunately if those resources are not accessible or available it creates additional problems that compromise success for students and parents.
- b. Staff at Bayview were very hands-on and involved in the process which made the attendance and information very rich both for the adults and students.

APPENDIX B: Participant Feedback by Neighborhood Center

This appendix captures some of the key issues for each session group. It is presented to reinforce feedback directly from the participants in each session for use by the Superintendent to confirm what she heard through the process.

Bridge Lakepoint (Spanish)

This group...

- Seem informed about what services, systems, or support exists for them. But they are unsure how to navigate that are heavily English embedded and normalized.
- Has a feeling that using or wanting to use services will/could result in punitive measures.
- Is troubled by the assessment process for mapping learning; there is a negative perception if they don't do well... parents don't understand what the assessment mapping purpose is and its intention and impact for their students.
- Has an interest in having community come in to teach, and to be more experiential on real life.
- Is interested in using cultural events as a way to educate and inform schools, students, community, etc.
- Would like social and emotional support for students and families.
- Would like targeted cultural relevance for the school
- Mandatory attendance for teacher conferences
- Has safety concerns about students
- Would like user friendly and more accessible communication

Key issues

- Communication is more than just engagement it is the information one can have access to truly understand how their students are doing
- Safety and in particular bus safety is important, as is student safety in the schools

Goodman Community Center

This group....

- Sees inequities in communication and review of excellence for their students.
 - The parents value rigor but they are not sure the teachers do for their students
- Would value suggestions on where to go deeper, make bold moves or stop, and how to better support and partner as family members.
- Wants to see:
 - Diversity Hires
 - More culturally representative staff
 - SEA bridge program to help folks get into teaching and are in the schools
 - Seek more buy-in, influence and quickly ramp up
 - Already a pipeline
 - Currently help 10 going for Master's degree... Expand this program
 - Youth workers. Neighborhood centers, ULGM, Centro
- Wants to see more teachers
- Supports alternative teacher licensure... Hadn't come through yet as policy
- To keep employees thriving
 - Teachers of color Advisory Group
 - Try to implement their recommendations
 - Also say focus on culture of schools folks would come to school district
- To have Community Input
 - Restorative Justice process and circle/ model around cultural biases filled by community
 - Help people understand how made people feel
- Stronger Relationships teacher/parents
 - Communication... So parents can engage more
 - Building on authentic relationships
 - Home visits ... Can be a best practice when done well (or neutral space)...PreK to 3rd
 - Teachers and staff need to have training
- Wants an adjusting academic calendar
 - Same number of days
 - Breaks for intervention
- Values language and being bilingual
 - Every school has a dedicated language
- Is concerned about after school programming
 - Inconsistent
- Wants more meetings like these sessions
 - Give parents credits that boost GPA for student
- Has suggestions and concerns about alternative schools
 - Going away...

- Work and learn going away
- School for pregnant girls
- Giving info about what is possible sooner
- Starting AVID/PEOPLE
- Wants to see a build your own tutor pipeline
 - Which could then lead to teacher pipeline

Key issues

1. It was clear that this group was the most skeptical about the outcomes from these sessions.
2. They were very interested in seeing more teachers who were diverse in schools.
3. They were also interested in seeing culturally competent curriculum that would reflect and include racial and ethnic stories of the United States.
4. They had a lot of suggestions for change and of what they are interested in seeing happen which was very similar to the session with Spanish speaking participants.

Bayview Community Center (Hmong)

This group...

- Cares about issues, but due to transportation, language and or just not understanding the systems or rules are not able to access the school systems.
- Principal at Randall (Mr. Wallace) said can come to school anytime... you can come right now. Makes parents feeling comfortable and anytime ... The parents think this should be true at any school and all the time.
- Feels no connection because there are no Hmong relationships, which means no connections or content to understand how to navigate the systems.
- Hmong community is not educated enough to know how to address concerns and how to find information. They don't use the website. Can there be a better way to learn about the school and costs, policies, programs.
- Wants to learn about what is happening with kids:
 - Elementary... More Communication
 - Middle School ... Calendar week
 - High School ... parent nights, use email, but overall difficult. Very electronic
 - Electronic info is a barrier potentially for Hmong
 - In general, this group is not sure what they can get for information, and how to get what want for information, and the difference between elementary, middle and high schools is challenging given some have kids who span the grades
 - Infinite Campus is key but is also a barrier
- Says the role of Bilingual Resource Staff (BRS) is unclear and not easily accessible either to schools or for parents.
- Says their kids will tell parents not to go to school or meetings since there is no translation

Key issues

- Very interested in support that would allow them to be connected and understand what is happening at their students school.
- They are unclear and do not know how to access the school district and their are no clear or consistent bridges to help them.

Bayview and Lussier Community Center (Youth)

This group...

- Has too much focus on college and don't discuss other (postsecondary) options. They are given language that success = college only.
- Is pushed to do non college research on their own, or maybe a specific teacher may offer themselves up as a resource.
- Suggests that when counselors come in they include more than just college focus.
- Suggests adding Restorative Justice... Monday advisory was removed, more options for a circle, or Restorative Justice work. Students didn't feel like it was well done so went away. How make it meaningful.
- Says advisory is called homeroom now at West; some like it and others don't. They get to learn ideas or concerns not shared in other classes. Trust issues a concern within some classes. Trust is not built in well. Backyard was mentioned as part of Memorial. Well received by previous students. It's called advisory now and it's not the same... Too structured and not enough trust built.
- Would like to see tapping into Neighborhood Center strengths, Center staff and teachers what more could be done.
- Wants student support and a push toward harder classes, and offer support to help overcome stereotype threat. Too often they are not exposed to harder / higher achievement.
- Notes that AVID encourages and supports the need for advanced course work and exposure to it.
- Says College credit is mentioned as part of higher level coursework--makes some students then hesitate to do it since not interested in college. How could credit be used to incentivize differently:
 - Internships
 - Credit towards other concepts
 - Get a certificate
- Like the fact that junior/senior level classes can be taken at Madison College, and they can get a certificate for dual credit.
- Says refresh freshman experience... Save cool experience for junior/senior vs. right away.
- Suggests that senior year be developed as more experiential rather than running into senioritis.
- Says teachers should be welcoming and not leave it up to the student to express their interest.
- Noted American History and lack of depth, extended options to learn more.

Key issues

- Are very interested in having their voices elevated in decision-making on issues that impact their school life.
- Do not agree with how the district frames college as the only pathway to success and want other options more clearly visible and bridged.